

TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

Thursday, September 19, 2013 - Minutes

5:30 p.m.

Special Meeting - WIIA

Present: Chairperson: Phil Washko, Vice Chair: Bernie Roderick, Dick Douglass, Dan Freitas, Andy Jones, Linda Meredith, and Pattie Pacella

Meeting called to order by the Chairperson at 5:30 p.m.

AGENDA:

Phil Washko announced this was a Special Meeting with the West Island Improvement Association. The Committee's first public forum.

Dick Douglass reported a little information about what he gathered about other Towns and what they did with the information they collected from Town Employee Interviews. He will discuss at our next meeting.

The public forum began at 6:00 p.m. Shirley introduced the Committee and Phil Washko. Introductions were made.

Phil Washko explained how Committee came to be. (2012-Charter Review)

Bernie Roderick reviewed the DOR Report (recommendations); and what was recommended.

Robert Hobson (Hoppy) asked a few questions:

Do we want people in Boston telling us what to do in Fairhaven?

Do we want one person in charge of the whole Town?

Mr. Hobson touched upon the water/sewer rate increase because someone in Town "screwed up").

He stated that the BPW Board was the only board that had 3 union contracts signed before Town Meeting.

Mr. Hobson voiced his concerns about the BPW Board recommendation in the DOR Report.

Linda Meredith reviewed the presentation/slideshow of the Roadmap.

Andy Jones reviewed the ground rules of the forum.

Phil Washko reviewed the tone of tonight's meeting; and encouraged the audience for their feedback.

Q&A:

Resident, JP Lemieux said he wanted to give the Committee "food for thought", which was that we were all volunteers on these Boards.

Frank Coelho said that the DOR Report has already brought on the increase for the water & sewer rates.

Phil Washko explained the DOR Report was to make recommendations only. He thanked Mr. Coelho for his feedback.

Mr. Hobson said that the BPW wanted to increase the water/sewer rates within 3 years, and the Selectman voted to get the rate done within a year.

John Roderiques said it was not a Town Accountant error.

Andy Jones asked Mr. Hobson if he wouldn't mind giving more information about the BPW Board.

JP Lemieux said that once you give up something, you can never get it back.

Phil Washko said the Committee was going to do it's due diligence before making any recommendation.

Someone asked who requested the Committee be formed. Phil Washko said it was brought up at Town Meeting and voted on.

Dan Freitas said that the Committee is a blank slate doing an investigation.

Greg Belanger asked the Committee to check out Avon, MA. And he thanked Mark Sylvia who formed the Board.

Bob W. said that the structure must be accountable.

Andy Jones assured them that was one of the things we have been in discussion about. Personnel, job descriptions/evaluations.

Phil Washko asked What improvements or changes do you think can be made to make our town government more effective and efficient?

Bob Rizzo explained he is a Town Meeting member and he felt that it was not explicit enough on budget requests. He didn't like the thought of a Town Manager (dictator).

Bernie Roderick said there were definite Pro's & Con's.

Someone said beaucracy costs money.

Andy Jones said if anyone had ideas to streamline that is what the Committee was interested in hearing. He gave the example of on-line permitting.)

Dick Douglas said that in the Committee's interviews with Department Heads they too don't want to be nit picked for budgeting.

Frank Coelho said there is one guy that controls the Town now and that's Jeff Osuch.

Someone asked for an explanation on the differences of Town Manager and Executive Secretary, which was explained by Phil Washko.

Joe Borelli shared his thoughts. Mr. Borelli said that department heads don't have meetings; perhaps a subcommittee for Purchasing should be considered, and that the Town needs to work like a business.

A question was asked about the hiring and firing of a Town Manager; answered was the person would work under the Selectman.

Bernie Roderick said that our Selectboard is 3 members, but perhaps it could be 5. That could be another thought process.

Frank Coelho said that he had read the DOR Report and he didn't see a problem with the number of people on the Finance Committee; and the BPW Board has no cost to the Town, so he can't understand why it would be recommended to change it. Mr. Coelho suggested looking into Hyannis Town Manager.

Pattie Pacella shared that the Committee was performing 'fact finding', and the DOR Report is clearly just 'recommendations' at this point.

Someone recommended questions for other Towns:

What made you decide to switch to TM?

Are you better off? What has changed?

Bonded? Better or worse?

And then he asked if the Committee would be able to write a report without an opinion.

A brief discussion on statistics = data (information).

Frank Coelho asked if the Committee was going to have meetings before Town Meeting.

Phil Washko explained again, the public forum process now in the beginning; and there would be more to come. He said there would be a forum as we got closer to making recommendations to get the Town's support.

Mr. Hobson asked about the Fire & Police Departments with hiring. The Fire Department is considered a "strong chief", and the Police Department goes thru the Selectman for hiring. He asked if the TM would change that.

John Roderiques explained that they still hire thru the civil service. He explained that no boards are going to disappear because a Town Manager comes in. He said there has to be a pyramid for accountability.

Someone asked about the salary for the current executive secretary and what the Town Manager would be.

John Roderiques explained that it was approximately \$110,000 for the Executive Secretary and the Town Manager would be approximately an additional \$20,000-\$30,000.

An elderly woman said the "Greatest board is the BPW."

Phil Washko explained that some towns used an advisory board for the BPW, and that was one option to consider.

Another resident had a complaint that the Public is not informed enough. She said that it was important that things improve in Town, and communication is key.

Resident and business owner in Town, Cathy Melanson seconded that Communication was most important. She also said that it would be easier if someone could go into Town Hall and get a checklist of sorts of what needs to be done in order to accomplish a plan in Town. Fees should be clear, a timeline perhaps. Streamlining the process.

Andy Jones said it was his own pet project to help streamline things. He mentioned the GIS system, and the IT department.

Mark Badway asked if committee was full.

Phil Washko explained there were two open seats, and they were actively seeking replacements for the seats.

Bernie Roderick said the positive time is now!

Phil Washko asked residents what their vision is for Fairhaven for the future?

Some responses were Tourism, Revolution, and to Generate Money.

The meeting ended at approximately 7:43pm.

Linda Meredith made a motion to adjourn, and was seconded by Bernie Roderick. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectively submitted,

Patricia A Pacella